

Telephone Interference

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

If you can hear a radio station or static on your cordless traditional (wired) telephone, you may have an interference problem. Interference occurs when your telephone fails to “block out” nearby radio communications.

All telephones contain electronic components that are sensitive to radio frequencies, but cordless telephones are particularly susceptible because they use radio transmitters/receivers. Cordless telephones are also highly sensitive to electrical noise, radio interference, and the communications of other nearby cordless phones. Cordless phones with more features like messaging, redial and intercom, contain more electronic components; this creates a greater potential for outside interference.

If your telephone was not equipped with interference protection when it was manufactured then it may react to nearby radio communications. For example, you could hear the transmission of a local radio station through your telephone’s handset. This is not necessarily a sign that the interference is intentional or that the interfering radio transmitter is illegal but that your equipment has no, or inadequate, protection.

How to Determine the Source of an Interference Problem

If you have several telephones or accessories like answering machines or caller ID, unplug all of them before you begin to determine the source of the interference. Then, plug each phone unit back into one of your wall jacks one at a time. Listen for the interference. If you hear interference through only one telephone, the problem is in that phone. Contact the manufacturer of that phone for help. Alternatively, simply stop using the phone and replace it with a radio-proof model, or install a radio filter.

(NOTE: Only a very small percentage of interference problems occur in outside telephone lines. Your local telephone company can check for this type of problem.)

It is important that you follow through and contact the manufacturer of your phone if you are having an interference problem. The company needs to know if you are unhappy about your phone’s failure to block out radio communications. Also, the manufacturer knows the designs of its telephones and may be able to suggest a solution for your specific phone.

What You Can Do About Interference

Interference problems begin at the factory when a telephone is built. Send your complaint to the manufacturer who built your telephone. You can also stop interference by using a specially designed “radio-proof” telephone, available by mail order. The Western Electric/ATT Desk Model is available from Pro Distributors of Lubbock, Texas; and the TPXL-D Desk Model is available from TCE Laboratories, Inc. of Canyon Lake, Texas. A recent FCC study found that these telephones, which have built-in interference protection, performed as the manufacturers claimed and in virtually all cases, they eliminated the interference.

Interference problems in telephones can also be stopped or greatly reduced with a radio filter. You can install this filter at the back of the telephone, on the line cord, and/or at the telephone wall jack. Radio filters are available at local phone product stores and by mail order.

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Summary

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The FCC strongly encourages manufacturers to include interference protection in their telephones as a benefit to consumers. The telephone manufacturing industry has developed voluntary standards for interference protection. Please contact your telephone manufacturer for further information.

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